

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 09159 231716Z
ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 9159

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, AO, CG, SHUM
SUBJECT: ANGOLAN/ZAIRIAN RECONCILIATION: REFUGEES

REF: KINSHASA 8958

1. SUMMARY: ZAIRIAN ACTING FON MINISTER IDZUMBUIR TOLD GATHERING OF 13 WESTERN AMBASSADORS AND CHARGES THAT NETO/MOBUTU MEETING LAST WEEKEND SUCCEEDED IN "CLEARING THE SKIES" FOR MORE SUBSTANTIAL STEPS TOWARD RECONCILIATION. IDZUMBUIR WAS CAUTIOUS IN HIS COMMENTS, APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING TO SCALE DOWN OVEROPTIMISM AND DRAW ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS YET TO BE RESOLVED.

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ACTING FON MINISTER ASKED THAT AMBASSADORS/CHARGES "SENSITIZE" THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO ZAIRE'S REFUGEE PROBLEMS, BUT HE MADE NO REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY

2. ON AUGUST 21, I REQUESTED MEETING WITH ACTING FON MINISTER IDZUMBUIR FOR FURTHER READ OUT ON NETO VISIT. IDZUMBUIR SET APPOINTMENT FOR LATE AFTERNOON AUGUST 22. WHEN I ARRIVED AT

FON MINISTRY, THERE WERE WAITING TWELVE DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES WHO ALSO HAD BEEN INVITED FOR BRIEFING. THEY WERE AMBASSADORS OR CHARGES OF FRANCE, GREECE, SPAIN, ITALY, BELGIUM, UK, CANADA, WEST GERMANY, SWEDEN, DENMARK, AUSTRIA, AND NETHERLANDS.

3. ACTING FON MINISTER PAINTED SKETCHY BUT CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC PICTURE OF NETO/MOBUTU MEETINGS AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS. HE CHARACTERIZED ATMOSPHERE AS EXTREMELY POSITIVE AND SAID MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO "CLEAR THE SKIES" SO THAT TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD MOVE TOWARD MORE CONCRETE STEPS IN RAPPROACHEMENT. OBVIOUSLY REFERRING TO PROPOSED COMMERCIAL AND TRANSPORTATION ACCORDS, HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN ENCOURAGING PROGRESS ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION. MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED, HE SAID WERE REFUGEES AND BORDER SURVEILLANCE. ON LATTER, IDZUMBUIR SAID THAT GOOD PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE, BUT THAT FURTHER BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ARE NEEDED BEFORE OAU CAN BE GIVEN GO-AHEAD TO SET UP VERIFICATION COMMISSION. AS FOR POSSIBLE MILITARY ACTIVITIES ALONG BORDER DURING INTERIM PERIOD, HE SAID THAT BOTH SIDES NOW FELT CONFIDENT THAT THEY COULD KEEP THEMSELVES INFORMED IF THERE WERE ANY RENEWED THREAT.

4. IDZUMBUIR THEN CAME TO THE MAIN REASON FOR THE MEETING. HE SAID THAT BEFORE FON MINISTER UMBA LEFT ON AUGUST 21, HE INSTRUCTED THAT AMBASSADORS/CHARGES PRESENT BE ASKED TO INFORM AND "SENSITIZE" THEIR GOVERNMENTS CONCERNING ZAIRE'S REFUGEE PROBLEMS. LARGELY BECAUSE OF AMNESTY DECLARED BY GOZ, HE SAID, AS MANY AS 42,600 ZAIRIANS MIGHT WISH TO RETURN
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FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. BREAKDOWN HE PROVIDED WAS UGANDA (30,000), ANGOLA (6,000), SUDAN (4,500), ZAMBIA (2,000) AND TANZANIA (100). ALTHOUGH THERE WERE LARGE NUMBERS OF ZAIRIANS IN RWANDA, BURUNDI, AND CONGO, HE SAID, THESE EXPATRIATES WERE COMPARATIVELY WELL-INTEGRATED AND WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN WHERE THEY WERE. HE ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER 6,000 IN ANGOLA ("WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN THERE BY FORCE OR WENT THERE BECAUSE OF THE FIGHTING") WOULD ALL WISH TO RETURN TO ZAIRE. (REPLYING TO A QUESTION

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IDZUMBUIR INDICATED THESE 6,000 INCLUDED EX-KATANGAN GENDARMES.) HE SAID THERE ARE ALREADY AN ESTIMATED 200,000 TO 250,000 ANGOLAN REFUGEES HERE, MANY OF THEM IN BAS ZAIRE.

5. ACTING FON MINISTER CHARACTERIZED SITUATION IN BAS ZAIRE AS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF DROUGHT, STUNTED HARVEST, AND SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF FOOD. HE SAID GOZ WILL NEED HELP IN "RECEIVING, FEEDING, AND REINSTALLING" REFUGEES IN ZAIRE. IN ADDITION TO FOOD, AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND SEEDS WERE MENTIONED AS MAIN NEEDS. IDZUMBUIR SAID THAT SPECIAL HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM AND WOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH UN HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES.

6. COMMENT: MY COLLEAGUES AND I WERE STRUCK BY CAUTIOUS FLAVOR GIVEN BY IDZUMBUIR TO HIS NONETHELESS POSITIVE EVALUATION OF NETO VISIT. I ATTRIBUTE SOME OF THIS CAUTION TO IDZUMBUIR'S OWN RESERVED NATURE AND THE TRADITIONAL RELUCTANCE OF MOBUTU'S SUBORDINATES TO DISCUSS THINGS WHICH IMMEDIATELY CONCERN THE PRESIDENT. AT SAME TIME ACTING FON MINISTER SEEMED INTENT ON SCALING DOWN POSSIBLE OVEROPTIMISM GENERATED BY THE VISIT AND ON EMPHASIZING THAT A LOT REMAINS TO BE DONE BEFORE RECONCILIATION CAN BE CONSIDERED ACCOMPLISHED. FACT. ON REFUGEE QUESTIONS, IDZUMBUIR SEEMED PARTIALLY INFORMED AT BEST AND GAVE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS ONLY MILDLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE TASK ASSIGNED HIM BY FON MINISTER UMBA. REFUGEE NUMBERS CITED BY IDZUMBUIR DIFFER IN SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS FROM EMBASSY'S EARLIER REPORTING. WE ARE CONSULTING UNHCR AND ICRC IN ANTICIPATION
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THAT GOZ MAY EVENTUALLY REQUEST OUR ASSISTANCE. WILL PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WE CAN OBTAIN.
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